

# DESIGNER INSIGHT

Our experts discuss the merits of varying materials and design styles for gates



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## WHICH TYPE OF GATE DO YOU PREFER - WOODEN OR METAL?

**AFT** The material should fit the style of your garden. A wrought-iron gate is ideal for a Victorian town house, while oak suits a country garden. Given the choice, I would use wood, especially green oak. I also like new timbers, such as accoya, a softwood with the durability of hardwood, and manmade LG HI-MACS, an acrylic stone that can be used to make contemporary versions of the classic timber gate.



**CD** My choice depends on whether it will be flanked by hedging, rails, or stone or rendered walls, and also if it has to blend with its surroundings or draw the eye. My favourite style of gate incorporates both – a timber frame inset with metal details. I used an agricultural gate like this for a seafront garden at Bracklesham (above), which echoes retaining beach walls and cage work in boundary walls.

**CM** I like both. Wrought-iron gates work well with brick walls and hedges; they also allow inviting glimpses of the garden. I have used a more solid tongue-and-groove cedar wood gate at the back of a town garden to mask a service area; in another design, I set mirrors behind two reclaimed iron gates on either side of a contemporary water feature to suggest a larger garden extending beyond them.

## WHAT WOULD YOUR DREAM TOWN GARDEN GATE LOOK LIKE?

**AFT** You may think a gate is for security but it is really about welcoming someone into your garden, so it should be a focal point. I would love a reclaimed oak gate with big studded ironmongery set into an old brick wall, but that is probably more of a fantasy feature for a walled garden. So I'd settle for a smart contemporary gate, made from sustainable accoya, with subtle detailing affording a peek inside.

**CD** A town gate needs to be welcoming and practical, so that you can get through it with the dog, shopping and children. It also needs to work with the paths either side and be self-closing, sending out a subtle message that your home is secure. In design terms I would choose a chunky timber frame, maybe shaped, with a detail from the house's architecture picked up for decorative metal posts set into the wood.



**CM** I like to paint gates to match the front door so that there is a visual link between the two. Or I would choose a scrolled iron gate (above) to match a period house with a small parterre in the front garden. Urban gardens are private places and an access gate to the side of a house needs to be solid for security reasons; again, I would try to link the design with the front door.

## CAN A SECURITY GATE EVER BE BEAUTIFUL?



**AFT** Absolutely. Design is all about the detail and the underlying framework can be clad in timber for a natural look, or a railed gate can complement a property and the adjoining walls or railings as in my design (above). You can also be creative with automated gates. Consider sliding types as well as swing gates, and a pedestrian gate that focuses on your front door rather than on the driveway.

**CD** Security gates can look boring but some imaginative designs do exist, or you could always ask a designer to create a style to suit your property. Gates with vertical metal poles provide a focal point while also offering security. Solid timber gates give greater privacy but block the view of the house. I prefer slatted wood that allows some light through and creates beautiful shadow patterns.

**CM** Security gates can be as beautiful as any others. For a contemporary style you can create exciting shapes with Corten steel, or try a galvanised etched steel gate at the entrance to an organic garden design. Gates within a garden need to complement other architectural features; in one gate I designed, I incorporated horizontal batons that matched the trellis I had used on the boundary walls.